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ABSTRACT

To aid in evaluating the First Year Communication Skills Program (FYCSP) and the Instructional Concepts Program (ICP) several tests were administered to two classes of kindergarten children. The objectives of the ICP were based on concepts that children would be expected to know when they entered the primary grades. The Instructional Concepts Test (ICT) measured the children's knowledge of these concepts. Items were constructed for each of the following categories: shapes, sizes, positions, amount, and prematheматics. Among the tests that were administered to the children were word attacks, word elements, and letter names. Student and parent attitudes were also surveyed as to their opinions of the program. The data collection of test results shows that both programs had been successful with kindergarten children. The program also proved to be well liked by children and parents. (Author/DEP)

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TITLE: EVALUATION OF THE FIRST-YEAR COMMUNICATION SKILLS AND INSTRUCTIONAL CONCEPTS PROGRAMS

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ABSTRACT

Several tests of general ability and reading skills were administered to kindergarten children using the Instructional Concepts Program and the First-Year Communication Skills Program together with SWRL programs in Art, Music and Drama. These test data are reported in this paper.

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EVALUATION OF THE FIRST-YEAR COMMUNICATION SKILLS
AND INSTRUCTIONAL CONCEPTS PROGRAMS

Several tests were administered to two classes using the Instructional Concepts Program (ICP) and the First-Year Communication Skills Program (FYCSP) during the 1970-1971 school year. The purpose of this evaluation was to determine the instructional effectiveness of the programs. Data from these tests are summarized in this paper.

PROCEDURES

Tryout Population

Two classrooms in one school took part in this evaluation of the Instructional Concepts and First-Year Communication Skills Programs. The school serves a predominantly urban, middle-class population. The kindergarten children were divided on the basis of age; older children were assigned to one classroom, younger children to the other. Both of the teachers had been participants in earlier FYCSP tryouts but were unfamiliar with the Instructional Concepts Program.

Instructional Outcomes

The objectives of the Instructional Concepts Program were based upon an analysis of first-grade curriculum guides used in Southern California. These materials make certain implicit assumptions concerning the conceptual abilities of first graders. For instance, the curriculum guide which advises, "Tell the children to turn to the top of the next page," implies that students will know concepts such as "turn," "top," "next" and "page." Concepts which occurred in at least two of the curriculum guides and which did not refer to specific objects (e.g., house, dog, tree, etc.) were adopted for the program. This list of concepts was revised on the basis

of suggestions from primary-grade teachers and curriculum specialists. The revision was also the result of individual assessment of kindergarten children on tasks involving use of various concepts. The result was a list of 96 concepts grouped into the following categories: colors, sizes, shapes, amounts, positions, pre-mathematics and pre-reading. In addition, a number of direction-following and test-taking skills are taught in the program. A list of the concepts in each concept category appears in Appendix A.

The outcomes of the First-Year Communication Skills Program include: (1) words--a reading vocabulary of approximately 100 words, (2) word elements--the ability to read 23 selected initial and ending sounds, (3) word-attack--the ability to sound out and read any one-syllable word composed of word elements from the program and (4) letter names--the ability to name each letter of the alphabet when shown the printed letter. A more detailed listing of these outcomes together with the sequence in which they are learned can be found in Appendix B.

Instructional Materials

The Instructional Concepts Program consists of 58 daily lessons divided into seven units. In each unit, children are introduced to the content by a series of lessons termed "initial instruction." Each of these lessons focuses upon two, three or four concepts. After the initial instruction on each unit, one day is set aside for assessment of the children's concept skills. The next two days are devoted to "second instruction," a time for review and to help children who had trouble learning the concepts.

The following instructional materials are provided: stories, story posters, concept books, flashcards, games, concept cards, criterion and practice exercises, procedure cards, a file box and a teacher's manual. A complete description of these materials can be found in an earlier Laboratory document (Scott and Martin, 1970).

The First-Year Communication Skills Program consists of ten units. Each unit includes instructions relating to the program outcomes, an assessment exercise and follow-up instruction.

The program includes storybooks, flashcards, comprehension sheets, criterion and practice exercises, procedure cards, an oral word and a game index, good work badges and a teacher's manual. A description of these materials can be found in another Laboratory document (Sullivan, 1971).

Data Collected

The Instructional Concepts Test measures children's knowledge of a sample of concepts included in the program outcomes. Three items were constructed for each of the following concept categories: shapes, sizes, positions, amounts and pre-mathematics. The required response is the identification of the orally presented concept by pointing. The test contains fifteen items, each consisting of a picture illustration of a concept and one or two distractors. Laboratory staff members individually administered the test using the script and recording form included in Appendix C.

A 50-item test assessed performance on the four outcomes of the First-Year Communication Skills Program. This test contains 10 items each covering program words, word elements, word-attack and letter names.

Each set of 10 items consists of five selected-response items and five constructed-response items. The test was individually administered by Laboratory staff members. Appendix C includes the test script and recording form.

Form 12A of the Cooperative Primary Reading Test was used to provide an additional measure of children's reading skills. This test consists of 50 selected-response items and is group-administered. National and California norms for first-grade students are available.

Two tests of the Metropolitan Readiness Battery were administered to provide supplementary measurements of word meaning and alphabet skills. Each of these tests consists of 16 three- or four-choice selected-response items. National norms for kindergarten children are available for both tests.

Student attitudes toward the instructional materials was measured by a questionnaire which asked children to describe the extent of their participation in and attitudes toward ten classroom activities. Each question was asked by a Laboratory staff member in an individual interview. Another questionnaire was sent to parents of each child in the tryout classes. It was designed to determine the extent to which parents believed the instructional programs were important and liked by the children.

Several classroom observations were conducted in both tryout classes. The major purpose of these observations was to measure time commitments to various classroom activities. The tryout teachers were interviewed many times during the school year. They were asked to give candid comments on all aspects of the tryout.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Test Results

Instructional Concepts. This program was used systematically with only a small number of children. At the beginning of the school-year, both tryout teachers believed that most of their students had already mastered a majority of the program's objectives. Because the most extensive use of the program was with the class to which the younger children were assigned, the posttest of the Instructional Concepts Program was administered only to this group. The mean score for 26 children tested was 14.0 on the 15-item test. The standard deviation was 1.2. This compares favorably with a posttest mean of 12.2 and a standard deviation of 2.3 for 368 students in an earlier tryout (Scott and Martin, 1970).

First-Year Communication Skills. Children enrolled in the tryout classes made substantial gains in reading skills during the school year. Table 1 reports the scores of tryout classes on the First-Year Communication Skills Program posttest. Scores for each outcome-area--words, word elements, word-attack and letter names--were very close to or above scores of first-grade children reported in a previous tryout (Sullivan and Majer, 1970). Of the two tryout classes, the class with the older children had higher mean scores in each outcome area. However, the differences were small--ranging from one to seven percent.

Table 2 contrasts the Cooperative Reading Test scores of the tryout classes with the scores of a kindergarten class which did not use the Laboratory's Communication Skills Program. Scores based upon national

TABLE 1

MEAN PERCENTAGE CORRECT FOR FIRST-YEAR COMMUNICATION SKILLS POSTTEST

Group	Number of Children	Mean Percentage Correct: Program Outcomes: Words	Word Elements	Word Attack	Letter Names	Totals
Tryout Class with Younger Children	26	88	91	74	92	86
Tryout Class with Older Children	27	89	97	79	99	91
1969-1970 Tryout*	105	89	93	67	93	87

*Program tryout reported by Sullivan and Majer, 1970.

TABLE 2

ITEMS CORRECT FOR COOPERATIVE PRIMARY READING TEST--FORM 12A

	Kindergarten Tryout Classes	Kindergarten Control Class	First-Grade Spring Norms: California (1970)	National (1966)
First Quartile	16.0	3.0	17.6	18.0
Median	21.2	6.0	22.4	22.8
Third Quartile	26.0	9.0	31.2	29.6

and California first-grade norms are also included. As expected, the scores of the kindergarten control class were very low--below chance levels since many children stopped before they had completed all items. The mean scores for the kindergarten classes using the Communication Skills Program indicated that these children were very close to the reading ability scores of an average first-grade class. The correlation between the scores on the Laboratory developed posttest and the Cooperative Reading Test was .51.

Several children made relatively low scores. Ten of 33 scores in the class of younger children were below the fifth percentile of first-grade norms; two of 31 scores were below the same level in the class of older children. Other kindergarten children had scores much higher than average first-grade results. Fourteen of 64 scores were above the national norm median for second-grade fall testing. Despite the existence of these high and low extremes, the distribution of scores in the tryout classes was similar to the average first-grade class. The standard deviation reported for national first-grade spring norms and the standard deviation for the tryout classes are both 9.1.

The word meaning and alphabet tests of the Metropolitan Readiness Battery were selected because they are closely related to achievement in reading. Scores of tryout classes and comparative figures from national norms are listed in Table 3. For the 16-item word meaning test, the mean of 61 tryout students was 10.10 compared with a national norm of 8.67. The superiority of the tryout classes was even larger on the 16-item alphabet test--14.51 versus a national norm of 9.39.

TABLE 3

ITEMS CORRECT FOR TWO 16-ITEM TESTS OF THE METROPOLITAN READINESS BATTERY

	Word Meaning		Alphabet	
	Tryout Classes	National Norms	Tryout Classes	National Norms
First Quartile	9	6	14	5
Median	10	9	16	10
Third Quartile	12	11	16	14

Children's Attitudes

The children in both tryout classes were individually interviewed and were asked questions relating to how well they liked various school activities. Six of the activities were part of Laboratory programs; four others were selected from activities in which the children frequently participated. Children were first asked whether they remembered participating in a particular activity. A sample of instructional materials was shown to the child at this time. At least 49 of the 53 children interviewed indicated that they had participated in eight of the ten classroom activities. A slightly smaller number had used the state adopted reading text and only 12 had used the Instructional Concepts Program books. Follow-up questions for each activity asked the child whether he liked the activity and, if so, did he like it "just OK," "a lot" or "a whole lot." Very few children reported that they did not like any of the activities. For each activity more than 40% of the children said that they liked it "a whole lot." The highest percentage of favorable comments was recorded for the small sample of children who had used the Instructional Concepts books. For the remaining activities, there were no major differences between the response patterns of Laboratory and non-Laboratory programs.

Parent Questionnaire

A questionnaire was sent to parents of the children participating in the tryout. Twenty-nine of 62 questionnaires were returned to the Laboratory. The questionnaire asked parents to check the extent to which they agreed or disagreed with the following statements:

1. My child learned important things from the SWRL programs.
2. My child liked the materials in the programs.
3. The SWRL programs should be used in kindergarten again next year.

Parents were encouraged to add any additional comments that they wished to make concerning the programs.

The parent response to the Laboratory programs was highly positive. All of the 29 parents who returned the questionnaire agreed that their child had learned important things from the programs, liked the materials, and that the programs should be used in kindergarten again next year. The percentage of each response for these questions is listed in Table 4.

TABLE 4

PARENT RESPONSES TO
PROGRAM QUESTIONNAIRE

Questionnaire Statement	Percentage of Responses			
	I agree very much	I agree	I disagree	I disagree very much
My child learned important things from the SWRL programs.	72	28	0	0
My child liked the materials in the programs.	79	21	0	0
The SWRL programs should be used in kindergarten again next year.	79	21	0	0

Pacing and Time Requirements of the Programs

Both tryout teachers felt that only a small number of the children in their classes lacked the skills taught in the Instructional Concepts Program. Therefore, the complete program was only used with these children. Other components of the program such as the stories were used with the entire class. The program was used at a pace close to the suggested one-lesson-per-day.

Both teachers began the First-Year Communications Skills Program at the beginning of the school year and devoted more time to the program activities than the 25 minutes per day suggested in the Teacher's Manual. Classroom observations showed that in the fall, reading instruction averaged 37 minutes per day. In the spring, this figure increased to 58 minutes.

Soon after the school year began, both classes were divided into three reading groups on the basis of ability. All groups completed the ten program units and many of the children proceeded on to the primers of the state adopted reading series.

Conclusions

The data collected in this tryout show that kindergarten children can develop a high level of reading skill. Equally important is the fact that the programs were well liked by the children, their parents and the teachers. These data indicate that in the hands of a skilled teacher, the Laboratory's instructional materials can be an important part of a successful kindergarten program.

REFERENCES

Scott, Roger O. and Martin, Morris F., "The 1969-1970 classroom tryout of the SWRL Instructional Concepts Program," SWRL Technical Memorandum TM-3-70-4, 1970.

Sullivan, Howard J. and Majer, Kenneth, "1969-1970 tryout of the First-Year and Second-Year Communication Skills Programs," SWRL Technical Note TN-3-70-2, 1970.

Sullivan, Howard J., "Perspectives in beginning reading instruction: development of the SWRL First-Year Communication Skills Program," SWRL Technical Report, 1971.

APPENDIX A

INSTRUCTIONAL CONCEPTS PROGRAM
CONTENT CHART

LESSON NUMBER	LESSON CONTENT
	COLORS AND DIRECTION-FOLLOWING SKILLS
1	Red, Blue
2	Yellow, Black
3	White, Brown
4	Green, Purple
5	Orange, Pink
6	Row, Numerals 1 to 5
7	Turn, Page, Mark
8	Criterion Exercise
9	First Review
10	Second Review
	SIZES
11	Larger, Smaller, Largest, Smallest
12	Shorter, Longer, Longest
13	Shorter, Taller, Shortest, Tallest
14	Thicker, Thinner
15	Criterion Exercise
16	First Review
17	Second Review
	AMOUNTS
18	One, Two, Three, Four
19	Five, Six, Seven
20	Eight, Nine, Ten
21	All, Some, None, No
22	More, Less, Most, Least
23	Criterion Exercise
24	First Review
25	Second Review
	SHAPES
26	Circle, Square, Triangle
27	Rectangle, Straight and Curved Lines
28	Criterion Exercise
29	First Review
30	Second Review

LESSON NUMBER	LESSON CONTENT
	POSITIONS
31	Front, Back, Middle
32	Top, Bottom, Side
33	Behind, In Front, Between
34	Beside, Next To, Around
35	Above, Below, Over, Under
36	Inside, Outside
37	Right, Left
38	First, Last, Beginning, End
39	First, Second, Third, Fourth
40	Criterion Exercise
41	First Review
42	Second Review
	COMPARISONS AND COMBINATIONS
43	Equal, Unequal (Amount)
44	Same, Different (Size, Shape, Color, Amount)
45	Not (Equal or Same)
46	Combined Colors & Shapes
47	Combined Colors & Sizes, Shapes & Sizes
48	Combined Shapes & Positions, Sizes & Positions
49	Criterion Exercise
50	First Review
51	Second Review
	PRE-READING
52	First, Last (Time)
53	Before, After (Time)
54	Letter, Word
55	Sound, Name
56	Criterion Exercise
57	First Review
58	Second Review

APPENDIX B

FIRST-YEAR COMMUNICATIONS SKILLS PROGRAM
CONTENT CHART

UNIT	OUTCOME NUMBER*			
	1	2	3	4
	Words	Word Elements	Word Attack	Letter Names
1	I, Sam, see, am, me, Mat	s, m, at	By Unit 5 and thereafter, the children should be able to sound out and read any one-syllable word composed of word elements taught previously in the program.	s, m, e, a, i, t
2	Mit, Sis, meet, in, it, sit, on, is	it, eet		n, o, h
3	sat, Ann, this, and, Nan, a, man, the	th, an, n		w, f, d
4	mad, that, at, Sid, we, will, with, fell, mess	ad, w, ill, f		l, r, b
5	fit, Nat, sun, them, us, what, feet, fun, run	un, r		u, c, y
6	Nell, who, yes, did, Ed, let, well, need, she	ell, et, l, eed		
7	net, ran, sad, no, fill, sheet, shut, mud	ut, sh		p, k, g
8	sand, sell, shell, fish, hat, he, then, nut, rat, set, feel, not, fat, if, wet	en, h		
9	fan, win, hand, hill, seed, weed, met, hit, was, to, bad, him, men, be	b		x, z, j, q, v
10	bat, his, wish, ball, bell, but, has, said, ant, Ben, bus, had, bed, bee, Bill, hid			

Outcome 1: Words that the children learn to read
Outcome 2: Beginning and ending sounds that the children learn to read
Outcome 3: Word-attack skills that the children learn to apply
Outcome 4: Letter names, both for capital and lower-case letters, that the children learn to say when shown the letters

APPENDIX C

PUPIL RECORD FORM

INSTRUCTIONAL CONCEPTS PROGRAM
DIAGNOSTIC TEST

Student _____
Teacher _____
School _____
AM or PM

WARM-UP EXERCISE

CARD

A. Point to the yellow butterfly.
B. Point to the white hat.

TEST

	SHAPE			
1.	Point to the square.	1. ___	2. *	3. ___
2.	Point to the triangle.	1. ___	2. *	3. ___
3.	Point to the rectangle.	1. *	2. ___	3. ___
	SIZE			
4.	Point to the thinner sandwich.	1. *	2. ___	
5.	Point to the largest turtle.	1. ___	2. ___	3. *
6.	Point to the shorter lizard.	1. ___	2. *	
	POSITION			
7.	Point to the cat at the end of the line.	1. ___	2. ___	3. *
8.	Point to the bird in front of the airplane.	1. *	2. ___	3. ___
9.	Point to the cat that is beside the star.	1. ___	2. ___	3. *
	AMOUNTS			
10.	Point to the pond with no ducks.	1. ___	2. ___	3. *
11.	See this box of apples? (Point to one box.) See this box of apples? (Point to other box.) Point to the box with 3 apples.	1. ___	2. *	
12.	See this box of marbles? (Point to one box.) See this box of marbles? (Point to other box.) Point to the box with 5 marbles.	1. *	2. ___	
	PRE-MATHEMATICS			
13.	Point to the green mouse beside the box.	1. *	2. ___	3. ___
14.	Point to the larger rectangle.	1. ___	2. *	3. ___
15.	See this cat? (Point to the cat in the margin.) Point to a cat that is a different size.	1. ___	2. *	3. ___

*Correct Response

FYCSP POSTTEST: 1970-71
Units 1-10

Name_____ School_____ District_____

Date_____ Teacher_____

Outcome 1: Words	Outcome 2: Word Elements	Outcome 3: Word Attack	Outcome 4: Letter Names
"Point to the word _____."	"Point to the letter(s) that make(s) the sound ____."	"Point to the word ____."	"Point to the letter ___."
1. set see sit + -	1. w t u + -	1. let lad [illegible] + -	1. H N k + -
2. will weed well + -	2. s z f + -	2. hut hit had + -	2. e l I + -
3. me need nut + -	3. ell eed et + -	3. seed sell sill + -	3. d b p + -
4. shell sell sheet + -	4. en an et + -	4. run rut rat + -	4. z X e + -
5. hit his hid + -	5. n h b + -	5. beet bee sheet + -	5. z w t + -
Total Correct____	Total Correct____	Total Correct____	Total Correct____
"Read this word."	"Say the sound of this (these) letter(s)."	"Read this word."	"Say the name of this letter."
1. am + -	1. m + -	1. fad + -	1. A + -
2. the + -	2. an + -	2. bet + -	2. F + -
3. feet + -	3. ut + -	3. lit + -	3. u + -
4. sad + -	4. sh + -	4. hen + -	4. k + -
5. hand + -	5. b + -	5. feed + -	5. v + -
Total Correct____	Total Correct____	Total Correct____	Total Correct____

TOTAL CORRECT SELECTED RESPONSES_____

TOTAL CORRECT CONSTRUCTED RESPONSES_____

GRAND TOTAL CORRECT RESPONSES_____